



## In Search of The Living God

By DON KISTLER

(Part One)  
From about 70 to 150 A.D. the majority of professed Christians residing in the Roman Empire spoke Greek. Old Testament and apostolic writings were in demand in this language. The Septuagint was much in use during that period.

Christianity had penetrated the Latin-speaking areas of Roman Africa by the latter part of the second century. Latin versions produced from Greek texts began to appear. No tradition about the date, place or authorship of the first manuscripts in Latin survives.

It is known of certainty that the Scillitan Martyrs at Carthage had in their box of rolls, "letters of Paul, the just man," in the year 180 A.D. They were evidently concerned to preserve the Pauline Epistles among their most cherished possessions.

By Tertullian's day, whose writings are dated 20-40 years later, the whole Bible seems to have been extant in Latin. His translations were from the Greek text. Cyprian, a writing between 240 and 250 A.D., quoted accurately from the Latin Bible. It may therefore be inferred that the New Testament was rendered into Latin, possibly at Carthage, toward the close of the second century.

A flood of manuscripts had come into existence by the time Jerome, the leading scholar of his day, was called to Rome for the purpose of undertaking a complete revision. Carelessness and lack of literary skill was damaging the inspired Word.

Jerome began the task in 382 A.D. When his finished product was officially adopted it became known as the Latin Vulgate. The term means "common or public use." There is no way of estimating the value of Jerome's service to the preservation and promulgation of Bible truth. Later translation into other languages, came to be indebted to his monumental work in Latin.

Teutons invaded the British Isles in the middle part of the fifth century. Eight hundred years intervened before an authoritative edition of the Scriptures appeared in the Anglo-Saxon language. The Latin version was regarded as highest authority during this long period. It was available

only in hand writing. This meant that a very small percentage of the population had access to the revealed truth.

The early part of the seventh century witnessed the first real effort to produce the Scriptures in language that the people could understand. These early Anglo-Saxon efforts, based upon Latin renderings, were almost futile. The texts were fragmentary, often confused and incoherent. It was however, a step in the right direction.

King Alfred, who ascended the West Saxon throne at the age of twenty-two, in the year 871 A.D., put forth a determined effort to circulate the Scriptures among his subjects. He personally worked at the task of translating, but like Caedmon and Bede, he died without attaining the desired objective.

A priesthood, directly responsible to Rome, was built up in Great Britain. Prior to 1250 A.D., the books of the Bible were solid, with no divisions according to chapters and verses. In that year a Cardinal by the name of Hugo, separated the books into chapters while working on a Latin concordance. The arrangement of verses came later. The system thus devised was followed in all subsequent editions.

John Wycliffe, the great English statesman and reformer, was born in 1320. He lived sixty-four years. His adult life was characterized by achievements of utmost importance to the progress of the church. The ecclesiastical organization of the times gave him most violent opposition.

Twenty-two years were required to produce the first Wycliffe Bible. The Latin Vulgate, Hebrew, and Greek texts were used as the basis for the translation. When finished, it became the first complete Bible ever seen in the English language. Its appearance marked the dawn of a new day in the westward march of civilization.

In reality two Wycliffe versions were produced. The first was written under his personal supervision. Parts of it were stiff, awkward and sometimes unintelligible from adhering too closely to the original Latin. The rendering was somewhat easier and more skillful in other portions. Con-

sidering and the problems, handicaps and difficulties involved, its appearance was a monumental achievement.

John Purvey, the eminent scholar and leader of the Lollard party,

continued the work with the aid of a group of trained helpers. The second Wycliffe Bible was not completed until four years after John Wycliffe died. It was far more idiomatic than the earlier

one, having been freed from many confusing Latinisms. Its vocabulary was less archaic.

The popularity of the later version admits no doubt, for even now despite faggots, burning and the ravages of time, more than one hundred and fifty

copies remain to confirm this fact. The following specimens offer a comparison between the early and the late renderings:

### EARLY VERSION

Psalm 1. (1) Blisful the man that went not awei in

the counsell of vnpiouse, and in the wei of sinful stod not; and in the chaeſer of pestilence sat not.

(2) But in the lawe of the Lord his will; and in the lawe of hym he shal seetell thinke dai and nyſt.

### LATE VERSION

Psalm 1. (1) Blessed is the man, that sede ntt in the councel of wickid men; and stood not in the wele of synneries, and sat not in the chailer of pestilence.

(2) But his willie is in the lawe of the Lord; and he schal bthinke in the law of hym dai and nyſt.

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